

June 22, 1959

Dr. Charles Phillips  
Division of Physical Defense  
Fort Detrick  
Frederick, Maryland

Dear Dr. Phillips:

This is to confirm our session on techniques of decontamination to be held here at Stanford, in the Biophysics Laboratory, at 10:30 a.m. on Wednesday, July 8th. Dr. Derbyshire's secretary at the National Academy of Sciences should be trying to get in touch with you to find out if there is any particular information you might like to have in advance of the meeting and also to confirm these arrangements. I will try to see to it that you get as much information in advance as possible. The other people who are opted to this meeting are Dr. G. W. Dunlap and Mr. W. R. Langden from General Electric in Schenectady, Dr. R. C. Baumann from the Payload Systems Division of NASA, and Dr. Richard Davies from Jet Propulsion Laboratories. Davies has promised to bring along a replica of the Pioneer IV payload to give you something tangible to look at. In addition, he has prepared a fairly systematic parts list which we might have a chance to go over item by item to see what specific methods of sterilization will be most applicable. Please let me know by mail or phone (Davenport 3-2441 extension 310) if I can do anything else to make this a more useful session. If you want to rush matters, I think it would be possible for you to take a plane arriving in the morning and to fly back the same night. Let me know if you have other plans in mind and would like me to make some hotel assignment for you.

What we discussed over the phone about the relationship between technical feasibility and policy is definitely coming to a head. According to latest suppositions, the next space probe will be a lunar rather than a planetary one and there has been considerable negative feeling against bothering about decontamination there. This is partly based on legitimate doubts as to the necessity of excessive caution with respect to this target but also, I am quite sure, it is also founded on inhibitions based on an exaggerated idea of the difficulty of an effective decontamination program. Apart from the written material that you may hope to get, you may find it profitable to try to contact Dr. Baumann directly at the Goddard Space Flight Research Center.

Looking forward to seeing you,

Yours sincerely,

Joshua Lederberg  
Professor of Genetics